

New to the program but still dating

Posted by P.almoni - 23 Nov 2012 11:16

Hi guys,

I've recently joined the GYE family, and have been overwhelmed by the amazing care and concern shown by all involved.

There are many questions which I want to discuss (perhaps by forums at a later date), but I reckon my most pressing issue is the following:

I've read elsewhere on this site that it's marriage while still struggling with lust issues is not recommended.

I'm 30 years old and am not keen to put dating on hold for any significant period...

Also, I've recently started dating someone (for marriage) and there seems to be potential for a lasting relationship...

(Just for the purposes of context, it is not a physical relationship).

Naturally I find the girl I'm dating attractive, but how do I balance the efforts to clear my mind of shmutz (on the one hand) with being around her (and finding her attractive) and attempting to build a relationship with her (on the other).

Any comments would be much appreciated.

Thank you!!

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Re: New to the program but still dating
Posted by nederman - 23 Nov 2012 14:43

[P.almoni wrote on 23 Nov 2012 11:16:](#)

Hi guys,

I've recently joined the GYE family, and have been overwhelmed by the amazing care and concern shown by all involved.

There are many questions which I want to discuss (perhaps by forums at a later date), but I reckon my most pressing issue is the following:

I've read elsewhere on this site that it's marriage while still struggling with lust issues is not recommended.

I think there are pros and cons.

You definitely should not get married in order to have an outlet for your lust, it's just going to blow up in your face.

On the other hand right now as you said you are "struggling," which means you need to do tshuva, and you need a zechus to do tshuva, and having children is a zechus. When you have children you will view your life as totally worth living and you will be willing to stop doing porn because you don't want your kids to do it.

If you are the sexaholics anonymous type, then you'll have to go SA meetings and I think you'll want to share with your wife that you are doing that, so if you start before you get married you are going to tell her that you are a sexaholic, and she may not want to marry you then. If you tell

her after you get married she may want to divorce you. If you start going to SA after you get married she may want to divorce you then, but if you already have children she may stick it out, which is what you need.

I'm 30 years old and am not keen to put dating on hold for any significant period...

My two cents:

Use the cognitive method (I can help you with that) for a few days.

If it doesn't work you'll know that you don't want to stop. In this case get married but understand that your wife doesn't want to act out your porn ideas. Your problem is not that you don't have an outlet, it's that you think you need sex. Sex is not a human need, but you need to learn this, and it may take you years to decide to learn it. In the meantime, you are going to masturbate, do porn, etc. Make sure you are discreet, don't let your wife catch you because she should not suffer because of you. When you have children you will really want to stop, and then you'll stop, either through sexaholics anonymous or through some other method.

If the cognitive method works then you'll have no problem and you can go ahead and get married and enjoy the rest of your life.

Also, I've recently started dating someone (for marriage) and there seems to be potential for a lasting relationship...

(Just for the purposes of context, it is not a physical relationship).

Naturally I find the girl I'm dating attractive, but how do I balance the efforts to clear my mind of shmutz (on the one hand) with being around her (and finding her attractive) and attempting to build a relationship with her (on the other).

It's not a problem of balance. The problem is that right now you believe that you need sex, so when you are with her you look at her, think about her etc. all the time telling yourself that you can't help it. Once that belief is removed (which you can do using the cognitive method in a matter of days) then you can date her all you want without adverse effects.

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Re: New to the program but still dating
Posted by Dov - 25 Nov 2012 07:31

Dear P.almoni,

Congratulations on finding a good woman to date! Hatzlocha with that, it's great to read that you feel it has good potential.

Based on what you wrote, it is impossible to say "you need to do this, or that". So I would like to ask a few questions that might help clarify for you what's best, and will surely make it easier for me and others to share useful experience with you.

1- Having some desire when dating a reasonably attractive woman is quite normal, and not indicative of a problem at all. The Torah tells us not to turn aside after our desires - not that it is a sin to *have* them. So....do you have reason to believe that you will do something to her -or is the challenge you face one of remaining totally mentally and spiritually pure?

1a - Have you a history of sexually acting out your lust that brings you GYE and the forum (if you are not comfortable sharing any details about its nature, that's obviously fine)? If you are OK with describing the source of your worries, this may be as fine a place to do it as any. It will probably help clarify how relevant the 'lust discussion' really is to your situation.

2- It's obviously premature to speak of whether you need a 12 step program or not - for most guys who have some lust challenges are obviously not *addicts*, but - have you had experience in 12 steps already? And/or have you gotten advice from a Rav or shrink in this area yet? If so, have you been suggested anything that might bear on the issue already?

Finally, in general, it is a challenge when the woman we date is pretty. But that is a blessing for her, and a curse...precisely for the reason you bring up here. Guys may be swayed to choose her primarily for her looks - and the girl is sometimes aware of this. It makes it harder for her to trust. It's a real challenge.

So I would suggest that as a good, caring Jew, and as a man who wants to maintain his own objectivity as much as possible:

Pray a lot.

Pray for her.

Pray for both of you to know the truth, for the ability you to respect her and any other woman you may end up dating. To see her through her pretty face and to her humanity.

Admit to other trusted friends that you are challenged by this. Get the confidence you need to be yourself and not flustered by her.

Pray for other guys who are dating, asking G-d to give them all help to use seichel and be real, rather than just think through their gonads or get flustered, too.

You are not alone in this challenge. But you can probably do it!

And if you answer the above questions - at least to yourself - the discussion may become more accurate. But in any case, pray to G-d at least whenever the subject arises in your mind. It may not solve your problem, but it is a mitzvah, is smart, and it will help *something*.

And smile, amigo!

- Dov

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Re: New to the program but still dating
Posted by P.almoni - 12 Dec 2012 16:28

Hi Nederman and Dov,

Thank you very much for your responses and I apologize for my delayed response.

I was doing really well (20 clean days) but recently had my first fall since joining the GYE program.

Nederman:

I'm starting to realize that marriage will not remove my lust.

The most obvious reason being that I sometimes experience lust throughout the day and clearly there are time when husband and wife can't be together.

To be honest, I'm not sure I should really be classified as a sexaholic.

If I wasn't Jewish / Frum, most people would say I just have a healthy libido.

I.e. in the non-jewish / secular world viewing porn and masturbating is (to a large extent) accepted as the norm. In fact, when I was in school masturbation was encouraged...

I would be interested in finding out more about the cognitive method. Can you reccomend some reading on the subject?

At the moment, my faith and religious connection is at such a low level that I'm not even sure I really want to stop...

Maybe I should just be dating less religious girls who could live with these kind of behaviours...

Dov:

Thank you for your good wishes.

To answer your questions:

1) T'G I don't think I'd do anything to her...

It's more just a question of staying mentally pure...

1a) I have a history of viewing porn and masturbating. I've never done anything more serious than that...

I've noticed though that these behaviours have to a large extent worn away my connection with Hashem.

I.e. If I believed in Hashem and then clearly I wouldn't be doing these activities. The fact that I do them is an indication that deep down I don't really believe...

And if I don't believe, well then why shouldn't I take it to the next level by getting involved physically with someone...

2) I've never discussed this with anyone before and I have no experience with a 12 step program...

I have noticed that having a fall often comes as a result of feeling 'low' or a sort of worthlessness.

In this regard I am trying to work on my self-esteem and do occasionally go to a psychologist.

I appreciate your advice about praying, and I will attempt to implement it...

I'm not sure I'm ready yet to admit my challenges in this area to anyone but I am slowly building up the courage...

Further discussion:

Just to add to the question, so I've been dating this girl for a few weeks now and recently asked her if she'd ever been in a physical relationship before.

She answered yes.

In principle this doesn't bother me, as I kind of expected it going in as she only became observant in the past few years.

What does bother me is that she was involved in this physical relationship after she became frum...

So, on the one hand I have concerns that she's not so committed...

Specifically, it bothers me that she wasn't concerned with the halochas of Nidah...

On the other hand, maybe the fact that she's stumbled in this way before makes her ideal for me and the struggles which I have...

Thanks again for your replies previously.

All the best!

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Re: New to the program but still dating
Posted by nederman - 12 Dec 2012 18:59

[P.almoni wrote:](#)

Hi Nederman and Dov,

Thank you very much for your responses and I apologize for my delayed response.

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Nederman:

I'm starting to realize that marriage will not remove my lust.

The most obvious reason being that I sometimes experience lust throughout the day and clearly there are time when husband and wife can't be together.

To be honest, I'm not sure I should really be classified as a sexaholic.

If I wasn't Jewish / Frum, most people would say I just have a healthy libido.

Not necessarily. For example, if a goy sees a girl that he likes and he never makes a move and then goes home and thinks about her that is a sign of depression (he believes she can never appreciate him, even though he really cannot know for sure unless he tries.) Another case: you are in a boring meeting, or a class, and you start thinking about sex. What's the problem? If a goy wants to think about sex he is better served doing it at a time when he can get the most out of it. Right now he is in a meeting or in a class and he could get something good out of *that* if he focuses on it. It all depends on what you use those sex thoughts for. Are you depressed, or addicted, or do they enrich your life? Disclaimer: a Jew should only do this with his wife.

I.e. in the non-jewish / secular world viewing porn and masturbating is (to a large extent) accepted as the norm. In fact, when I was in school masturbation was encouraged...

Losers masturbate, winners go home and sleep with the prom queen. It's a joke but it contains a profound truth. A self-respecting person does everything in its proper time and in the way it was intended.

I would be interested in finding out more about the cognitive method. Can you recommend some reading on the subject?

You can read *Feeling Good* first and then *Intimate Connections*, both by David Burns. It can be scary to read therapy books, so if you want to make sure you don't procrastinate you can set a hard limit on how long you'll read it for every day. I made it bathroom reading.

At the moment, my faith and religious connection is at such a low level that I'm not even sure I really want to stop...

You *don't* want to stop. You will learn that people always do what they want, so the fact that you *wish* you could stop is solid evidence that you don't want to stop (because you do what you really want) and that acting out makes you feel bad. The first order of business is to do a cost-benefit analysis of your feelings day-to-day, and your short-term goals. You can read about it. You can also call me on the phone if you like, I can walk you through it.

Maybe I should just be dating less religious girls who could live with these kind of behaviours...

I disagree with that. When you do something you need to do it to the best of your ability in order to achieve great results. To be a Jew you need to be a Jew like the most traditional, main-stream Jew you can find. If you need to move, then move to some place where you can find some Jews who seem to you like the genuine article.

Also, nobody lives with these kinds of behaviors. When I wasn't frum I did this to my non-Jewish wife and eventually we got divorced. She didn't go for it either.

I.e. If I believed in Hashem and then clearly I wouldn't be doing these activities.

Totally not true. You do believe in Hashem, but you also believe that Hashem will cut you a lot of slack because you have watched Him do it in the past. Since you know that, you take advantage of His patience. Normal.

The fact that I do them is an indication that deep down I don't really believe...

And if I don't believe, well then why shouldn't I take it to the next level by getting involved physically with someone...

No. You secretly believe that lust is too much for you to handle, and you want to go off the derech so you can lust. Lust is not too much for you to handle, and you can learn that with the cognitive method. When you do your cost-benefit analysis you will also figure out that going off the derech is not all it's cracked up to be. The fundamental reason is because physical desires don't make people happy *in the long run*. What you have to do is see *it* in your cost-benefit analysis *without actually trying it out*.

In this regard I am trying to work on my self-esteem and do occasionally go to a psychologist.

The first book I recommended can take care of this for you. There are studies that show that bibliotherapy with Feeling Good is about as effective as actual therapy. If you get an insight therapist (a traditional therapist, who thinks you can never really change) you can stay depressed for years or decades.

Further discussion:

Just to add to the question, so I've been dating this girl for a few weeks now and recently asked her if she'd ever been in a physical relationship before. She answered yes. In principle this doesn't bother me, as I kind of expected it going in as she only became observant in the past few years. What does bother me is that she was involved in this physical relationship after she became frum... So, on the one hand I have concerns that she's not so committed... Specifically, it bothers me that she wasn't concerned with the halochas of Nidah...

I think you are right to be concerned. This free dating business is not going to get you a committed marriage. Everyone knows that people that don't have premarital sex stay married longer. If you are not going to propose to this girl I believe the best choice is to stop dating her. I

know it's easy for me to say, but basically that's the way it has to be.

On the other hand, maybe the fact that she's stumbled in this way before makes her ideal for me and the struggles which I have...

This is a prime example of mind reading. You can't really read peoples' minds, and you can't read Hashem's mind either. This is one of the cognitive distortions you can read about in the books I mentioned. Since you don't *really* know you have to take a course of action which is appropriate given the uncertainty. This is the sin of the spies, they saw things they didn't expect and instead of asking the local Rav (Moshe Rabbeinu) what it all meant they decided it themselves. The rational behavior is to suspend judgement until you have some hard evidence.

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Re: New to the program but still dating

Posted by Dov - 14 Dec 2012 04:24

Dear P.almoni,

A few things for you, chaver: Thanks for being so open, and I feel that you are being so direct and open already that taking that step to speak with safe people about these important things is not so far from you, any more. I also get the feeling that speaking to a trusted spiritual advisor would be very important in order to flesh out the real issues and help you succeed at clear-thinking and self-honesty. You are striving so hard to be honest, real, and open...but we fool ourselves sometimes in subtle ways. And that is part of why using self-help books or working the 12 steps on our own are not a great answer. No matter how much they may help us, they foster more isolation...and our worst chronic problem is often being alone in a corner again *with our own brains*. Would I have gotten better on my own - I'd have been so full of myself that I'd have continued to see everything everybody else does and everything that happens to me through my own private little lens. It would all still be all about me. But don't worry! By opening up you will *not* lose your own brains - but they *will* probably work more clearly and you may

even feel safer to make trusted decisions that actually work.

I doubt your issues are that complex. And it sounds as if you may see things a bit like I tend to: black or white, all or nothing:

1- the inner conviction that if I act out with porn or sex with myself, that means I do not believe...

2- do you have the facts clear on her yet? Did she really disregard hilchos niddah after she had clear knowledge of them? Did she believe in them then, just as she does now? Perhaps not.

There are matters of degrees, here. And that is very important to consider if I am going to maintain perspective and context. And perspective and context - sichel - is far more important than Torah knowledge itself. Torah knowledge leads us to be worse, if we lack the proper context that derech eretz provides, as the GR"A teaches.

I gotta go now but will try to finish this post later, time to light menorah and brighten things up a bit again!

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Re: New to the program but still dating
Posted by Dov - 15 Dec 2012 00:30

So, when you say that using porn again (or even having sex with yourself again) proves that "I don't really believe in Hashem (or His Torah)", I think that is a bit extreme and I'll try to tell you just why I say that and you can 'try it on and see if it fits', too:

I spent about 15 years experimenting with sex and erotica as a typical sex and lust addict. Just as alcoholics and heroin addicts do, I developed an internal 'culture' of hiding and lying to myself and others in order to keep living with it. My religious struggle and the tearful, sincere-feeling 'Teshuvah' that came with it, was just as powerful a drug - and just as poisonous for me - as the masturbation and porn use were. It was a cycle that was entirely treif for me, and I never got out of it until I gave up the entire package, be"H. My compulsive acting out included lots of things, from walking through libraries and normal book stores to see dirty books there, to ogling pretty women, to porn, to lots of phone sex, and of course to sex with myself (masturbation) and more. It was gehinom on earth. My emunah was shredded to pieces by the time I was finally, *finally* willing to go to any lengths just to get what the sober alcoholics had: just plain **sobriety**. The kedusha v'taharah, madreigos and deveikus that I spent all those years so focused on were obviously not getting me anywhere but were I **was**: into my cyclical and desperate masturbating and porn use, severe frustration with sex at home, and deep religious confusion.

I was absolutely convinced as you sound to be, that my problem was my *heresy*, and things were not looking very good. It seemed stupid for me to pick this *weakest* of times in my emunah and Jewishness, to go and risk involvement with a spiritually secular 12-step group! But all those years that I approached my terrible problem as being my yiddishkeit - it just got worse! Things were dark indeed for this Dov...

Amazingly, when I stopped acting out (with help of the pain that Hashem granted me from my own insanity, finally opening up to safe and understanding men who were getting better, and working the simple program other sober people were working to stay that way) - I got sober and have remained sober one imperfect day at a time for 15 years and 9 months so far (but who's
)

And guess what happened to my emunah?

Within a few months sober, I realized that I had never lost it. I never even thought the issue through to 'figure it all out' - I knew I believed, but that I was screwed up and had this quirk, or disease, if you will: I was hard-wired to worship and throw myself to erotica and compulsive sex *whenever I **started** to use lust as a drug*. I could again see that I **am** a Jew, that I **have** deep, real emunah in Hashem and His Torah. Maybe I got it from my holocaust survivor parents who never hated or ran away from Hashem after losing everything else but Him...maybe I got it from thinking the G-d idea through as a young person, maybe it is a gift from Him, Himself...who knows. But I have it.

And it is really the opposite of what you might intuit: It is *our compulsive and desperate acting out with lust* that hides our emunah from us, rather than our poor emunah that *brings* us to compulsively act out with lust. Why it *is* that way, is totally irrelevant, and the study of it is poison for us. It is just more gayvoh. And as the Messilas Yeshorim teaches, of all things that separate us from true success in a relationship with Hashem and His Torah, gayvoh is the most dangerous, tricky, and far-reaching. I discovered that my years of 'typical yeshivah-guy' insistence on achieving some measure of 'respectable' self-knowledge, self-control, and self esteem **before** agreeing to *just give up my sex* and humbly learn how to stay sober, was nothing but **lust!**

And also amazingly, as a result of humbly first getting sober and humbly learning how to remain sober be"H, **Hashem gave me all those things back anyhow!** For all practical purposes, self-understanding, self-control, and self-esteem are mine again! But I got (and am still getting) these things, as gifts. I thank my Eternal Best Friend for them as they come. It may sound like semantics to some, but I - and everyone who knows and loves me - knows the difference between the 'oni bapesach' and the self-made man when they meet him. Pischu li sha'arei tzadek...zeh hasha'ar laShem - always knowing that I am dependent on Him to *pischu li* - "open the door! I am outside in some way, for I am just *starting*, in some respect, and I still need You!" Zeh hasha'ar laShem - that's the derech for me. A humble and inglorious path, no glorious background music,, no crowds of applause, and perhaps even no s'char for me in Olam haBoh for "being misgabber and beating the yetzer hora with my own brains or power"...who knows? Who cares? I'd never go back to that hellish life of confusion, pain, and betrayal of my self, wife,

So, even if 'understanding it all and figuring me all out' *would* lead me to some measure of control over my problem - *I'd never take it now!* For the gayvoh of that is more goyish than the sexually acting out ever was.

OK, that was a long one indeed. Hope you don't mind and that it will be of some help. Have a great Rosh Chodesh, a lichtigeh early candle-lighting today, and a great and clean Shabbos, chaver.

Finally, a little dvar Torah, be"H, for today:

Teves is the only month that gets a full hallel - because the light that is in the 36 chanukah candles has a 'piece' of the future Ohr haGanuz that will restore the moon to even more brightness than our present sun (as we say in kidush levanah). So this rosh chodesh has a

moon that is not fully shamed by it's lost light. Unlike the other months whose moons get only a half-hallel because they are shamed, Teves' new moon gets a *full* hallel in 'light' of the future that is hinted at today. A nice thought, no? Enjoy the lifting of some of the darkness this year, you holy yid!

- Dov

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Re: New to the program but still dating
Posted by nederman - 16 Dec 2012 05:50

So, even if 'understanding it all and figuring me all out' would lead me to some measure of control over my problem - I'd never take it now! For the gayvoh of that is more goyish than the sexually acting out ever was.

There's no such thing anyway. There's no such thing as self-control. You are always in control because deep down you always do what you want based on the data, it's just that the data is usually pretty bad.

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